

Institutionalizing Mission Engagement and Leadership Formation at a Dominican University

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Abstract

Developing mission-centered students, faculty, and staff leaders is a common goal among Catholic higher educational institutions. This article shares how Barry University's Dominican heritage informs its strategies for leadership development. A review of the last decade at Barry illuminated four essential elements that serve to institutionalize mission engagement: (1) the development of mission-driven leaders, (2) an institutional discernment process, (3) the strategic prioritization of mission education, and (4) the creation of affirming organizational structures. Increased collaboration between campus leaders and the university's founding congregation, the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, Michigan, helped define the role of mission education as a strategic priority. Today, models for leadership formation, highly informed by a Dominican charism for higher education, manifest in the fabric of institutional structures and campus programming.

Founded in the Dominican tradition, Barry University's 75th anniversary as a Catholic university offers the perfect opportunity to reflect upon its institutional commitment to mission education and leadership formation for its students, faculty, and staff. One significant challenge facing Catholic institutions of higher education is how best to convey their mission to future generations, given the diminished presence of vowed religious leaders on campus.¹ Barry University is no exception. With only five Adrian Dominican Sisters still serving on campus,

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¹ Scott Flanagan, "Navigating and Utilizing Values during Change Processes at Catholic Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 29(2): 133-153.

including the president, it is essential that members of the Barry University community assume increasing responsibility for the future viability of its religious identity, heritage, and mission.

Over the last decade, Barry University engaged in a retrospective examination of its institutional response to the challenge of strategic leadership actions and related outcomes that served to institutionalize mission engagement. This article will share how the university has prioritized mission education for students, faculty, and staff and the essential elements that inform its model for leadership formation today. Relevant topics in Catholic Dominican higher education are highlighted, followed by a discussion of the strategic initiatives that laid the groundwork for the integration and expression of Barry University's Dominican heritage for years to come.

Catholic Dominican Higher Education

Catholic universities have “been recognized as an incomparable center of creativity and dissemination of knowledge for the good of humanity.”² Catholic Dominican higher education (CDHE), shaped by the Dominican intellectual tradition, has always championed a pursuit for knowledge (*veritas*) that is characterized by compassion and a commitment to justice. Common values that have been identified as part of a Dominican vision for higher education include the “pursuit of truth, integration of study and contemplation, seeing God in all things, compassion and justice, and engaged scholarship.”³ Preaching is at the heart of the Dominican charism and can manifest itself in many ways on college campuses, from teaching in a classroom, to university-sponsored programs and events, and the individual actions and behaviors of community members. These practices, informed by Dominican values, nurture a contemplative spirit, promote the arts, build community, cultivate diversity, inspire compassion, and foster justice for the common good.⁴

Similarly, the foundation of Barry University's mission as an Adrian Dominican institution cannot be properly understood outside the context of these values. Guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition, Barry University is committed to the “integration of study,

² Pope John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae: On Catholic Universities* (Vatican City: Typis: Polyglottis Vaticani, 1990), 1.

³ C. Bouchard et al., *The Dominican Charism in American Higher Education: A Vision in Service of Truth* (River Forest, IL: Dominican University Press, 2012), 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

reflection, and action that informs the intellectual life. Faithful to this tradition, a Barry University education and university experience foster individual and communal transformation where learning leads to knowledge and truth, reflection leads to informed action, and a commitment to social justice leads to collaborative service.”⁵

The mission and values of the Adrian Dominican sisters serve as the inspiration for the university’s values, or Core Commitments, and guide the enactment of the university’s mission. Barry University’s Core Commitments include a pledge to foster knowledge and truth, inclusive community, social justice, and collaborative service.⁶

Essential Elements to Institutionalize Mission Engagement

Four essential elements emerge in an analysis of Barry University’s efforts over the last decade to institutionalize mission engagement: (1) the development of mission-driven leaders; (2) an institutional discernment process; (3) the strategic prioritization of mission education; and (4) the creation of affirming organizational structures. Organizational learning theory offers insight into the collaborative learning that occurs between an institution’s founding congregation and its newest members. This learning serves to preserve and protect the organizational culture operating within an institution.⁷ The transmission of values and culture from an institution’s religious sponsors to the institution itself is fostered by the retelling of foundational stories.⁸ Strategic leadership decisions of various stakeholders serve to influence the developing culture to align with the original vision of its founders and promote the institution’s mission.

Development of Mission-Driven Leaders

For the last decade, under the current president, the Barry University community has been challenged by the executive leadership team to internalize—as an institutional priority—the importance of mission

⁵ Barry University mission statement, accessed October 15, 2015.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Adriana Kezar, “Organizational Learning in Higher Education,” in *New Directions for Higher Education*, ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 7-23.

⁸ Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, “The Dominican Charism: A Living Tradition of Grace.” See <http://opcentral.org/resources/2015/01/13/mary-catherine-hilkert-the-dominican-charism-a-living-tradition-of-grace/>.

education and leadership formation. To accomplish this task, the president began her tenure by revitalizing institutional traditions and initiating new ones. Creating educational opportunities that honored the institution's Dominican heritage and Adrian Dominican foundation served to convey the importance of these experiences at this juncture in Barry University's history. Initial actions ranged from establishing large university-wide traditions, such as Founders' Week, to regular email reminders linking Barry University's mission with important issues in Catholic higher education. From a symbolic perspective, these actions elevated the importance of setting time aside as an institution to engage lay faculty and staff in reflection and dialogue regarding their role in continuing Barry University's Catholic and Dominican heritage. Senior leaders encouraged students, faculty, and staff to participate in and present at national conferences as well as programs designed to create engagement with members of the larger Dominican family.

To expand lay leadership, the president formed a Mission Integration Council to review current mission engagement efforts at both university and department levels. The Council consists of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and an Adrian Dominican sister. Its purpose is to ensure that the university's mission, Catholic identity, and Dominican heritage permeate the life of the university and foster individual and communal transformation in the communities we serve. Members are appointed by the president to serve a four-year term, and are considered to be "in formation" as they learn from campus experts about the university's Dominican heritage. Once their term on the committee is finished, they are invited to become Mission Ambassadors to serve as champions of Barry University's mission through activities such as facilitating roundtable mission discussions and serving as departmental liaisons.

Faculty and staff leadership development is further enhanced by attendance at numerous mission luncheons and academic lectures. Held throughout the year, these events focus on key elements of Barry University's mission and Core Commitments. Participation in these scholarly activities serves as professional development and supervisors encourage attendance from their departments. These efforts offer the university community opportunities to learn about key themes of its institutional heritage and important elements in CDHE, i.e., Catholic Social Teaching, Dominican pillars, and Catholic peacebuilding. Program assessments conducted over the past several years indicate that a critical mass of new and seasoned mission-driven leaders have emerged with the knowledge base and confidence to articulate and promote the distinctive nature of Barry University's campus culture.

Institutional Discernment

The second key area of influence underscores the importance of reflection and discernment during times of institutional change.⁹ The process of mission discernment at Barry University explores possibilities for the future and the desire to infuse its mission and values into ordinary decision making and daily operations.¹⁰ From the university's Mission Integration Council to its strategic planning committees, participatory and engaged leaders explored new possibilities for mission engagement in academic programs, classrooms, and campus activities. This process, supported by senior leaders, also included a grassroots element through feedback from students, faculty, staff, and alumni. In true Dominican fashion, a variety of diverse perspectives emerged during planning meetings and open forums, honoring the institution's core commitment to foster an inclusive community.

Over time, the institutional discernment process led to the creation of important documents developed to guide and inform campus leaders. For example, the Barry University theology faculty published a booklet titled *Mission Statement and Core Commitments: A Commentary*¹¹ to support and deepen the university's personal and collective understanding of its newly approved mission statement. This document serves as an institutional resource for integrating key concepts that make a Barry University education distinctive.

Key mission offices and committees also worked collaboratively to develop the Barry University *Mission Education Framework*.¹² This document supports the university in creating a more comprehensive mission education program by using three developmental levels in the formation of students, faculty, and staff leaders. The model recognizes that the campus community has a range of experiences that require a variety of engagement opportunities for effective mission integration. These opportunities build upon one another. The university begins with *foundational* opportunities offered to students, faculty, or staff members as part of their orientation program. *Formative* opportunities further this development, appreciation, and personal expression

⁹ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Paul D. Marceu, Th.D., "Lessons of Mission Discernment," *Health Progress* (2003): 40.

¹¹ Mark O. P. Wedig, "The Dominican Heritage," *Mission Statement and Core Commitments: A Commentary*, ed. Gloria L. Schaab, SSJ, (Miami Shores, FL: Barry University, 2010).

¹² Barry University *Mission Education Framework*, 2012.

as this understanding of mission unfolds over time. Finally, *advanced* opportunities respond to the need for more in-depth education as members of our community become more proficient in mission integration.

The *Mission Engagement Framework* is used annually to promote effective organizational program planning and better use of university resources. It also serves to create a larger institutional and community impact through identifying themes for partnering with departments and sharing annual program goals. One important outcome has been the consistent campus-wide use of the phrase *Learn, Reflect, Serve* to capture the spirit of Barry University's mission.

Another guiding document used during the institutional discernment process is *The Dominican Charism in American Higher Education: A Vision of Service to Truth*.¹³ Shortly after its publication, the Mission Integration Council began using this document as a catalyst for its own internal formation. This resource helped the council gain a deeper understanding of how Barry University's core commitments flow from its Dominican heritage. This and other articles focused on CDHE helped shape the *Leading the Legacy* leadership formation program. This program promotes an understanding among faculty and staff of the Dominican values that are most closely aligned with Barry University's campus culture. These values include the pursuit of truth and study, nurturing a contemplative spirit, serving the common good, addressing the signs of the time, fostering hospitality, and welcoming diversity. Mission-centered activities, often facilitated by Adrian Dominican sisters, further dialogue on lay leadership within the wider community. These ongoing discussions with the sisters help shape Barry University's lay leadership model. Grant support from the sisters underscores the importance of developing a mission leadership formation program and has served to elevate these efforts as an institutional priority. Creating and utilizing internal documents and publications in CDHE not only honors the scholarship of Barry University faculty and staff and other authors, but also validates the process of institutional discernment as part of a larger goal for Catholic Dominican institutions.

Strategic Prioritization of Mission Education

The third key area of influence relates to strategically prioritizing mission education as a core value and integrating it operationally into

¹³ Bouchard, *The Dominican Charism*, 8.

the fabric of the institution. Barry University's quarterly and annual reporting process calls for a divisional and departmental review of mission-centric activities and their outcomes related to annual goals. Providing guidance through a consistent annual process of review and being intentional in how the institution reports on its work helps maintain this strategic priority. These efforts were developed as part of Barry University's 2006-2011 and 2011-2016 Strategic Agendas and serve to operationalize how Barry University enacts its mission to CDHE and its faithfulness to uphold the vision of the Adrian Dominican sisters. The 2006-2011 Strategic Agenda called for a review of the university's mission statement, resulting in collaborative reflection by the university community about the language used to communicate its institutional mission. This review process led to a mission statement revision that produced a clearer, more accurate articulation of how Barry University's contemporary spirit embodies its Catholic identity.

Barry University's 2011-2016 Strategic Agenda embraced a coordinated campus-wide effort toward mission education and a clear communication strategy related to key mission priorities. These priorities called upon the university community to explore three critical questions: (1) What does it mean to be the most widely recognized Catholic university in the South? (2) What is the best way to provide students, faculty, and staff with the human, financial, physical, technological, and other learning resources characteristic of a first-choice university? and (3) How does Barry University identify, model, and promote best practices in higher education for creating an effective and sustainable multicultural and diverse living and learning environment? With campus leaders able to articulate the importance of mission-centric priorities and the accountability provided by the Strategic Agenda and annual reporting process, significant progress has been made in addressing these questions.

Affirming Organizational Structures

The fourth essential element contributing to Barry University's mission engagement efforts was to create organizational structures that communicate the centrality of mission as an institutional priority. With the other components in place (as mentioned above), the president created the Division of Mission and Institutional Effectiveness (DMIE). DMIE supports and facilitates the essential activities required to review, assess, evaluate, and continuously improve all programs and services to ensure alignment with the university's mission and goals. An Office of Mission Engagement (OME), within the DMIE, was created to offer learning and

leadership development opportunities that foster a personal and collective understanding of Barry University's mission for students, faculty and staff. These campus-wide collaborative efforts identify mission engagement opportunities within various campus units, and build synergies and partners to integrate the mission with intention into all that we do as a university community. One special role of OME is to coordinate and host the university's mission orientation program. From the moment of hire, new faculty and staff are introduced to the inclusive and collaborative organizational culture that defines Barry University. Strategic university priorities are presented in terms of how they further the institution's mission and core commitments. New faculty and staff are asked to join senior leaders in carrying forth this important legacy by engaging students with the slogan *Learn, Reflect, Serve*. These newest members of the campus community are invited to attend the numerous mission programs planned throughout each year, designed to engage all developmental levels.

Another important endeavor hosted by the DMIE is the creation of a *Mission Engagement Dialogue*. This project emerged from a desire to assess the university's current understanding of its mission and core commitments, and the observation that although academic units were involved in review of their programs in terms of mission-congruence, non-academic units did not have an analogous process of mission review. As a result, it was determined that more guidance and a consistent review process were needed to support mission engagement at the departmental level. Following a two-year discernment process, a *Mission Engagement Dialogue* was created to engage staff in exploring the connections among Barry University's Adrian Dominican foundation, its mission and core commitments, and its strategic priorities. Following the sessions, a large majority of the participants indicated a deeper understanding of their role in furthering Barry University's mission. Through education, reflection, and dialogue, DMIE and OME promote Barry University's values as essential components of mission effectiveness and institutional excellence.

Mission-Centered Student Engagement

Building on the institutional efforts affirmed by DMIE, the student affairs team regrouped to reshape and repurpose divisional programs that embrace Catholic identity, honor Dominican traditions and heritage, and advance Barry University's mission and core commitments. This is an ongoing process, and successful completion illustrates the importance of developing mission-driven leaders in student affairs who

will initiate an organizational discernment process that would effectively repurpose the divisional strategic priorities and establish a supportive organizational structure for implementation.

Before any new mission-centered student engagement programs could be developed, the divisional leadership and staff members had to actively participate in an organizational discernment process similar to the one described above. Early in the process, these five questions were examined: (1) Who are we as educators at a Catholic and Dominican institution? (2) What do we, as educators committed to Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Dominican values, hold in high esteem? (3) What do the university's Core Commitments mean to us? (4) What do we stand for in student affairs at Barry University? (5) What is our role in advancing the university's vision, mission, and purpose? Reflecting on these questions could not be done absent the documents guiding the work of student affairs educators at a Catholic Dominican institution.

The *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities* is an excellent tool to guide this reflection and dialogue. The document provides a framework for leadership and staff development, program planning, and assessment for student affairs professionals who work at Catholic colleges and universities.¹⁴

Deep and intentional reflection on the principles put the student affairs team in a better position to develop a vision, mission, and strategic agenda in the context of Catholic Dominican education. This resource was utilized to help the student affairs team assess if the division was effectively achieving the vision of the principles. This enabled divisional leadership to identify areas of strengths and improvement, which ultimately led to the creation of a new vision and mission statement for the division. Strategic directions for the division were also created and progress on these goals is assessed and reported out quarterly. A primary focus of the division's new mission is to help Barry University create experiences that help transform students into leaders for a just and humane world.¹⁵ This division also embraced Saint Catherine of Siena's emphatic charge to "Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire," as a "call" to students. Saint Catherine's call is the inspiration for the division's vocational discernment model for student leadership transformation.

¹⁴ Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), Association for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities (ASACCU), and Jesuit Association of Student Personnel Administrators (JASPA), *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs at Catholic Colleges and Universities*. (Washington, DC: Authors, 2007).

¹⁵ Student Affairs mission statement, Barry University, accessed October 15, 2015.

Vocational Discernment

“From their earliest beginnings, Dominicans have been called to see what is needed and to do what is useful.”¹⁶ Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, former Master of the Dominican Order, reminds us that a central question for the Dominican order addresses our human existence—“the question of a good and meaningful life.”¹⁷ Likewise, Barry University is committed to “scholarly and critical analysis of fundamental questions of the human experience” and aims to prepare students to become citizens (leaders) for a just and humane world. Student leaders, who will set the world on fire, must learn to “see what is needed and to do what is useful”¹⁸ to be effective agents of societal change. In student affairs, the focus then becomes how to help students define what it means to lead a good and meaningful life, discern their individual calling, and begin to determine their life purpose.

Having campus ministry in the division enables staff members to better incorporate contemplation into the discernment process. A seamless partnership with academic affairs as well facilitates intellectual engagement with critical reflection as demonstrated in the residential learning communities. When done together well, our students are moved to contemplative action, i.e., *Learn, Reflect, Serve*.

College students are in a key life stage for identity development as they explore personal, social, and professional options. During this period, students try to discern who they are and how they want to direct their strengths and interests in terms of what will be useful. Students ask themselves: What should I major in? How should I spend my extra-curricular time? What do I want to do when I graduate?¹⁹ Given the significance of these life questions, it is truly fitting that Dominicans have demonstrated a long and viable commitment to Catholic higher education. Understanding the need to help students discover their calling, student affairs developed a vocational discernment model informed by CDHE values that are highly characterized by contemplation to guide program development for students.

¹⁶ Bouchard, *The Dominican Charism*, 7.

¹⁷ See Timothy Radcliffe, OP, in Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *A Vision of Justice: Engaging Catholic Social Teaching on the College Campus*, eds. Susan Crawford Sullivan and Ron Pagnucco, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), pp. xvii–xviii.

One of the most quoted and well-known definitions of vocational calling used today comes from Frederick Buechner: “The place God calls you to, is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”²⁰ Vocational discernment includes both an exploration of one’s passions and gifts, along with an exploration of the hungers and needs of the world in which they live.²¹ A call to one’s vocation is then an “invitation to serve” a need in the world by using one’s innate gifts, skills, and passions.²²

While the vocational discernment process begins with an examination of self, the process should also address the holistic development of students. Resembling the Dominican charism for education, the process must challenge students to look up from their academic pursuits and to struggle with the larger questions of life. Given that student learning and development are inextricably interrelated and intertwined,²³ learning and contemplation are equally connected to the examination of self and holistic development. From this perspective, vocational discernment focuses on learning and reflecting upon a person’s true self, including personality characteristics, values, beliefs, interests, and passions. Coming out of this exploration, students must then ask what gifts, skills, and aptitudes they bring to the world.

The essence of vocational discernment at Barry University is best represented by the previously referenced phrase *Learn, Reflect, Serve*. Barry University students: (1) learn about themselves and the needs of society; (2) reflect on who they are in relation to the needs of society and their roles; and (3) serve the community while finding purpose in life. Similar to the *Mission Education Framework*, the vocational discernment model is an active process that acknowledges the various dimensions and periods of development. The model in the **Figure** demonstrates the relationship between the multidimensional, multifaceted, and very complex developmental and transformational process for college students. Situating the model in a three-dimensional cube demonstrates the many paths for learning and growth, and the complexity among the various developmental and transformative domains.

²⁰ F. Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC*. (San Francisco: Harpers, 1993).

²¹ Ibid.

²² J. P. Schuster, *Answering Your Call: A Guide to Living Your Deepest Purpose*. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003).

²³ American College Personal Association, *Student Learning Imperative*. (Alexandria, VA: ACPA, 1994).

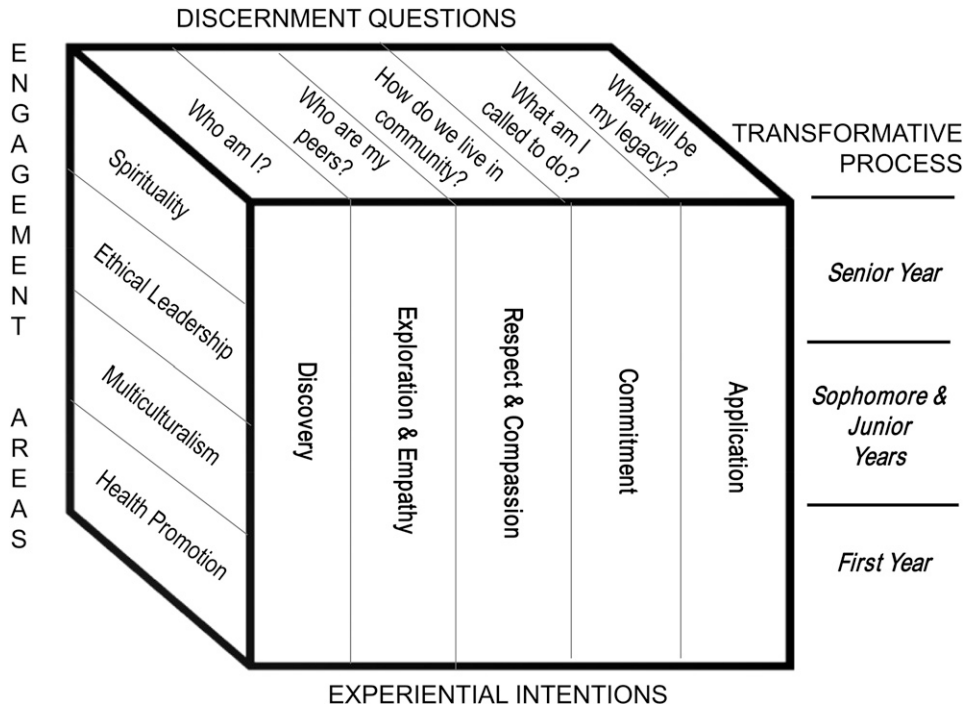


Figure: Transformational Vocational Discernment Framework

Similar to Sullivan and Pagnucco, the model offers five discernment questions for a good and meaningful life: (1) Who am I? (2) Who are my peers? (3) How do we live in community? (4) What am I called to do? (5) What will be my legacy? Genuine and authentic consideration of these questions helps students discover and explore their potential vocation. Students are invited to discern these questions in co-curricular programs areas intentionally designed to challenge and support them through this process. The model in the figure identifies central co-curricular program areas for student engagement—health promotion, intercultural, ethical leadership, and spiritual programs. These four areas will be further discussed as part of transformative student engagement.

As students matriculate from their first year to senior year and move through this transformative process, it is important to realize where they find themselves developmentally. Many factors affect this process which include, but are not limited to age, experience, culture, and gender. There are over six decades of research that addresses these factors and describes how college students develop psychosocially,

intellectually or cognitively, ethically, morally, and eventually become self-authored.²⁴ More than likely, cognitive complexity to these questions becomes more sophisticated as a student moves from first year to senior year.

Abes, Jones, and McEwen's summary of the scholarship on interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive development, the three primary domains of development, highlights the complex relationship among these domains.²⁵ In their re-conceptualized model of multiple dimension of identity, it becomes clear that a student's answer to "Who am I?" and "What am I called to do?" is dependent on understanding many intrapersonal dimensions of self that include race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, and religion.²⁶ While related to the intrapersonal domain but equally unique is the interpersonal domain in which students must grapple with "Who are my peers?" and "How do we live in community?" Ultimately, assuming some degree of self-authorship, a Barry University graduate has the potential to define his or her beliefs, identity, and social relations²⁷ and respond to "What am I called do?" and "What will be my legacy?" The division currently administers a graduate outcomes survey and seeks to utilize the data collected to improve student learning and development goals and objectives.

To facilitate this process, a student engages in areas with experiential intentions to discover self, explore and empathize with peers, demonstrate respect and compassion for others, commit to interest(s) and/or passion(s), and apply skills and competencies that might advance his or her calling. Because Barry University emphasizes experiential learning, students are encouraged to apply, observe, and mirror behavior, in order to add depth and breadth to their understanding of an idea, concept, or reality. Through this experience, students may commit to special use or purpose what is realized in the deepening of that understanding.

²⁴ N. J. Evans, et al., *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2010).

²⁵ E. Abes, et al., "Reconceptualizing the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity: The Role of Meaning-Making Capacity in the Construction of Multiple Identities," *Journal of College Student Development* 48(1) (2007): 1-22.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Marcia Baxter Magolda, "Three Elements of Self-authorship," *Journal of College Student Development* 49(4) (2008): 269-284.

Transformative Student Engagement

The university's vibrant and engaged campus life provides opportunities for students to be transformed in a college environment characterized by the Dominican charism. Catholic Social Teaching, aligned with the pursuit of truth and an emphasis on social justice, is critical to developing a transformative student experience characterized by this charism. Knowing that individual transformation and achievement are inherent, students receive support and encouragement through student engagement programs intended to help facilitate the process of discerning and responding to their values, beliefs, interests, passions, and convictions. Programs for student engagement in the model focus on the following areas: (1) health promotion, (2) multiculturalism, (3) ethical leadership, and (4) spirituality.

Health promotion. The first student engagement area of the vocational discernment model focuses on wellness and health promotion. An initial awareness that the human person is both sacred and social is paramount to fully discover the answer to the question, "Who am I?" A person's "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God ... So you must honor God with your body."²⁸ Building on this foundation, students must learn the physical, emotional, and mental health implications of their choices—on self, others, and community.

Students can live up to high standards of personal behavior and demonstrate character and virtue. By recognizing one's self in relation to the others and the world, everyone has a social responsibility to contribute to the greater good of the Barry University community and society. Productive discovery and exploration of self and others in the context of wellness and healthy lifestyles must be approached in a safe, secure, and healthy environment.

Ultimately, the intent is to increase student awareness and understanding of the steps that can be taken to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle and campus community. The engagement goals for health promotion are to provide opportunities for students to develop relationships that are supportive, healthy, and developmental (growth-oriented), and to use evidence-based practice to provide programs and services that produce optimum health outcomes for college students

²⁸ 1 Cor 6:19-20.

and campus communities. Achieving these goals is done with a focus on a healthy body, mind, and spirit.

Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, the second student engagement area, supports the university's strategic goal to "identify, model, and promote best practices in higher education that create an effective and sustainable multicultural and diverse living and learning environment." To accomplish this goal, creating "effective and sustainable multicultural and diverse living and learning environments" was identified as the university's first objective, to which student affairs is deeply committed.

Grounded in our Catholic identity, student affairs espouses the notion that the inherent dignity of each unique individual is where the moral vision for the Barry University community begins. Students must first demonstrate dignity, humility, integrity, and pride in and of themselves before they can expect to earn these qualities from others. In the spirit of community, individuals should extend the same courtesies and privileges to others that are extended to and expected of oneself. The division attempts to cultivate a campus climate that is characterized by inclusivity and solidarity and promotes awareness and understanding of diversity and respect for the human dignity of all persons.

Engagement around multiculturalism emphasizes the need to provide opportunities for students to discover and explore the various dimensions of self that make up their identity, to provide opportunities for students to explore and learn about others, difference, pluralism and inclusion, and provide opportunities for students to develop skills and competencies to live and work effectively in a diverse and multicultural world—in community with others. Active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity in ways that increase awareness, knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of individual interaction within institutions is important.²⁹

Ethical leadership. Committed to developing compassionate agents of social change or "leaders for a just and humane world," the third student engagement focus area for a transformative student experience is ethical leadership. CST is the tradition of thought in which the Church seeks to advance justice in the world by engaging social, cultural, political, and economic realities in our day. Thus, CST is both

²⁹ Association of American Colleges & Universities, *Making Excellence Inclusive* (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Retrieved from http://www.aacu.org/compass/inclusive_excellence.cfm.

fitting and essential to the Catholic university's mission: the education and (leadership) formation of its students.³⁰

Barry University's student leadership ideal is aligned with the Dominican devotion to learning and espouses a commitment to personal and community transformation. The leadership ideal is the confluence of four leadership approaches: authentic, global, servant, and transformational. The DePorres Center for Ethical Leadership (named after Saint Martin de Porres, a saint of the Dominican Order who lived in Lima, Peru in the 16th century) offers programs that promote this concept for student leadership. DePorres devoted his life to prayer, love of neighbor, and care for creation, and worked tirelessly in service of the poor and to bring reconciliation among those people divided by race, ethnicity, and religion. Following his example of service to others across all boundaries of race, ethnicity, and religion, the center is a resource and catalyst to help students engage in authentic reflection and make connections between faith, mission, service, and justice. Leadership skills and competencies in diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice training are key student learning objectives for the center. With these skills, the vision is for students to become responsible and engaged citizens, with capacities for critical and integrative thinking, who will contribute to the common good shared solutions to important public problems.

A deep understanding of CST enables staff members in student affairs to promote Barry University's core commitment and the division's aspiration to develop leaders for a just and humane world. With a campus environment committed to inclusion, social justice, and service, many students engage in social justice activism. Students, as effective leaders, need to understand how to appropriately engage in this important work. A framework to guide this type of activity was created to ensure that students engaging in social justice activism that models St. Dominic. The intent is to put faculty and staff advisers in a position to effectively advise students through social justice activism from start to finish and hold students accountable to Barry University's core commitments and leadership ideal. Social justice activism at Barry is informed action that supports the rights of people who are poor, vulnerable, and marginalized and which promotes a just and more peaceful world. Drawing on the work of the Adrian Dominican sisters, social justice activism at Barry University

³⁰ Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, *Catholic Higher Education and Catholic Social Teaching: A Vision Statement*. Retrieved from <http://www.accunet.org> on October 15, 2015.

progresses through four stages that begins with knowledge acquisition, which leads to action, and emerges through leadership. Reflection, the final stage, is also key to the previous three stages.³¹

Spirituality. With a focus on spirituality, students are invited into an active and meaningful relationship with the Divine that is intended toward deepening a student's faith and understanding of their capacity to live in a value-based community. Fostering a campus environment that promotes spiritual exploration, faith formation, and religious practice through prayer, liturgy, ecumenical and interfaith relationships, collaboration, and campus outreach is essential at a Dominican university. Students must have opportunities to engage in spiritual discovery and exploration so that they may cultivate a deeper awareness of God, self, and humanity.

In the *Principles of Good Practice*, Principle 3 advocates that student affairs provide opportunities that are enriched by the integration of faith and reason.³² These opportunities help students develop a "habit of reflection and to value prayer in bringing both faith and reason to the discernment process of how to live out their learning experiences and the values of Catholic higher education in their personal and professional lives."³³ Students need a diversity of opportunities that encourage them to participate more fully in their faith communities. To do this successfully, spaces are needed in which the integrity of one's faith tradition can be celebrated, supported, and affirmed. Barry University offers a variety of traditions, rituals, and symbols that honor our Dominican heritage while also respecting other faith traditions.

Conclusion

This article highlights strategic efforts that transpired over a decade, characterized by four essential elements that serve to institutionalize mission engagement and leadership formation. Over time, a mission-centric campus climate and culture has been realized that is fostered by campus leaders through their internalization of institutional values. By empowering individuals and committees, and the renewal of existing campus traditions and creation of new ones, a stronger Dominican charism for education has been affirmed. This process involved a commitment

³¹ Barry University social justice framework, 2013.

³² *Principles of Good Practice*.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

to institutional discernment, revisiting program goals and objectives, effective communication strategies, and the development of accountability systems. Supportive organizational structures serve to build critical mass for emerging and established mission oriented initiatives that foster the realization of strategic priorities.

As Dominican colleges and universities face the future, finding key ways to integrate and internalize the principles and values of CDHE is critical to mission and institutional effectiveness. Developing leadership capacity that furthers the institution's identity and the future viability of its heritage helps address some of the challenges facing Catholic institutions' efforts to sustain their educational commitments.